

Newsletter of the Stable Fly Action Group



From The SFAG Desk

Community Meeting at Neergabby – May

Before our recent meetings with State politicians, community members in Neergabby organised a public gathering on the stable fly issue. SFAG Chairman Bob Wilson attended, urging residents to join SFAG and strengthen our collective voice. Shire Stable Fly Control Officer Mick Emmanuel also outlined the proactive work being carried out locally.

Meeting Local MPs at Gingin

On 5 June, the SFAG Committee met with Shane Love MLA (Member for Mid West) and Lachlan Hunter MLA (Member for Central Wheatbelt and Shadow Minister for Agriculture) at the Shire of Gingin Council Chambers. Shire representatives, including CEO Scott Wildgoose, Stable Fly Control Officer Mick Emmanuel, and PEHO Tanya Anderson, also attended.



Stable Fly in action, feeding on a human

New Privacy Policy

SFAG has adopted its first Privacy Policy, ensuring that all personal information collected through our reporting system is protected, transparent, and compliant with evolving WA legislation.

Publicity and Committee Support

Despite 20 years of operation, SFAG continues to meet people unaware of our role in representing the

community. To strengthen our outreach, we are seeking an additional committee member with media and communications skills. Please contact the Secretary if you can help.

Meeting with Minister Jarvis – 22 July

The SFAG Committee, together with Shire of Gingin representatives, met with Minister Jackie Jarvis and her Principal Policy Adviser Patrick Page at Dumas House. While the Minister was unable to travel to Gingin, we made clear our hope that she will attend a local public community meeting in the near future.

In preparation, SFAG sent the Minister a briefing pack including a timeline of significant events dating back to 1992, a short video presentation showing the severe impacts of stable flies, and detailed questions on notice.

Key issues raised included:

- The urgent **biosecurity and livestock disease risks** posed by stable flies.
- **Animal welfare concerns** for livestock.
- The very slow progress of the **SFMP2019 Review**, which the Minister confirmed will not be finalised until the Biosecurity & Agriculture Management Act (BAM Act) review is complete — a process that could take another 3–5 years.
- The need for **research and funding into management of vegetable crop residues**, with particular focus on **centre pivot irrigation practices and water usage**.
- Clarification of **roles and responsibilities** under any proposed delegation of powers to local government.

We were encouraged that the Minister engaged seriously with these matters, asked questions, and requested further material, including Geoff Slater's Wheel Ruts Control Method video. While the legislative review will take time, the Minister indicated the SFMP may be open to some modifications in the meantime. We await her written responses to our questions.

Petition to Parliament

A petition to Parliament has been suggested, and while SFAG has not ruled this out, the Committee has chosen to defer any decision until after the Minister's responses are received.

Looking Ahead – The SFAG Chronicle

We are pleased to report that **The SFAG Chronicle: 30 Years of Efforts to Control Stable Flies on the Swan Coastal Plain (1992-2022)** is now in production, with publication expected in early 2026. This important record will be available in printed and digital formats, thanks to the generosity of our donors.



Chairman's Report

Presented at the 2025 AGM

This is my **20th** Chairman's report - I'll say no more about that!

I'm going to make this a fairly light Chairman's report this year as many of the items mentioned will be in our next newsletter, which will be coming out soon and contain much more detail.

I welcome everyone who has gathered here today for our first day-time AGM. We most probably have a mixture of reasons for being here today, from long-suffering people who have been affected by Stable Fly over many years, to financial sponsors of the SFAG, financial supporters of "*The Stable Fly Chronicle -1992 to 2022*" and, of course, those who have come along to hear the guest speakers' presentations. Whatever your motivation, we are pleased that you have joined us today.

As most of you would be aware, the 2024/25 season was a particularly bad one for Stable Fly. Our website's online reporting system was running hot from this time last year, through the worst of the spring-summer-autumn period, and we even had reports through the winter period. This could be a portent of a particularly nasty fly-breeding season to come. I will leave it to Mick Emmanuel, the Shire of Gingin Stable Fly Officer, to give you a more detailed overview.

The SFAG committee met nearly every month to discuss and plan strategies to minimise this problem into the future. Some or all members of the committee attended the following functions during the year.

- November 2024 – A momentous event took place after our AGM when I contacted our entomologist friends in Japan who had been working with certain insects as biological control agents of SF in that country. Japan had just suffered an outbreak of Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), and the order had been given that to rid the country of this disease, all known vectors of LSD had to be eliminated. As Stable Fly was one of the main culprits, this meant that all specimens of Stable Fly had to be sprayed and killed. The upshot of this was that all the Japanese researchers' experiments were totally destroyed in the process.
- **November [cont]** – This sharpened our focus on the biosecurity risks that Stable Fly and Lumpy Skin Disease pose to Western Australia and the nation. That renewed focus is reflected today in our keynote speaker, Dr Marion Seymour, WA's Deputy Chief Veterinarian, who will brief us on the latest developments in LSD and the associated biosecurity challenges.
- **December 2024** – A meeting with DPIRD to discuss progress [or not] of the review of the Stable Fly Management Plan 2019. The SFAG committee regards the review of this document to be crucial, as we have pointed out many deficiencies in the old Management Plan. SFAG had submitted a number of changes and additions to the upgraded Management Plan, and these were discussed in detail at this meeting with Ron Shepherd, Peter Adams and Jacky Grayson. More on this issue later.
- **2025 February** – The SFAG committee met with Scott Wildgoose, the new CEO of the Shire of Gingin, to bring him up to speed with the Stable Fly problem in the Shire and to assure him of our continued support for the Gingin Stable Fly Control Officer, Mick Emmanuel. This was a very worthwhile meeting in our opinion. Executive Manager James Bayliss from the Shire was also in attendance.
- **February [cont]** – The SFAG Chairman and Secretary, and Shire of Gingin Stable Fly Control Officer, Mick Emmanuel, met with City of Swan Mayor, Tanya Richardson, Neil Harries, PEHO, and Leon van der Linde,

Executive Manager, to discuss Stable Fly issues around the Bullsbrook area, in addition to issues arising from the review of the Stable Fly Management Plan 2019.

- **May** – A couple of SFAG committee members attended a public meeting held at Neergabby where the local residents, who this season have been at 'Ground Zero' for the worst effects of the Stable Fly infestation, gathered to discuss their experiences with Mick Emmanuel. I urged the residents to continue writing to the Minister for Agriculture and Food to make her aware of their suffering.
- **June** – Following on from much lobbying and letter writing, by residents as well as the SFAG committee, the SFAG hosted our local member of parliament, Shane Love, and Lachlan Hunter, the Shadow Minister for Agriculture, at the Shire of Gingin Council offices to discuss the Stable Fly issue. The Shire of Gingin CEO, Scott Wildgoose, was in attendance, as well as a number of councillors and Shire staff. As a follow-up to the meeting, the politicians had asked for an opportunity to meet with as many affected community members as possible. This led to a lively and well-attended gathering at the local café, CU@Park.
- **June [cont]** – SFAG developed a Privacy Policy, which is posted on our website. It was a long time coming, but we determined that it needed to be done, particularly to safeguard the personal information supplied by contributors to the SFAG Reporting System.
- **July** – It finally happened; we met with the Minister! After 2½ years, missed correspondence, and an election, the SFAG committee made the trip to Dumas House, joined by Shire of Gingin CEO Scott Wildgoose and Stable Fly Control Officer Mick Emmanuel.

We spent just over half an hour with the Hon Jackie Jarvis MLA and Senior Policy Adviser Patrick Page, and it proved to be a positive and constructive discussion. The Minister took the time to listen to every speaker, asked sharp questions, and filled pages with notes.

Even better, we are already seeing movement at senior levels. The Biosecurity Council of

WA sent apologies for today and confirmed they are preparing advice for the Minister on improving Stable Fly management, and they plan to visit Gingin soon to meet with local stakeholders.

- **Retiring:** During the last 19 out of 20 years that SFAG has been operating, Mr Bevan Gresele has been our go-to man to audit the SFAG financial books. We thank Bevan for this unsung community support that he has given to us over that time, and we would like to show our appreciation with a certificate as well as a small token for his efforts.



Bevan Gresele accepting a gift and Certificate of Appreciation from Chairman Bob Wilson

Sponsorship: Also, during this year, the SFAG committee decided to more formally recognise the groups and individuals who sponsor our cause. With that in mind we created three levels of sponsorship:

- Bronze Level: \$250
- Silver Level: \$500
- Gold Level: \$1000

It is with a great deal of appreciation that we would like to acknowledge our first "official" Gold Sponsor, the Western Australian Broiler Growers Association [WABGA]. The past president of WABGA, Mr Len Brajkovich, has been a longtime generous supporter of SFAG, and we acknowledge his support over the years. We have with us today the current President of WABGA, Mr Stephen Edmondson, to accept this

Certificate of Appreciation from SFAG.

Details of our Sponsorship Prospectus are available on the updated SFAG website.



Stephen Edmondson accepts a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of WABGA

The Stable Fly Chronicle: After three years of fundraising, we are delighted to announce that The Stable Fly Chronicle will finally be produced as a printed book. This milestone has only been made possible through the generosity of donors who have backed the project. We would like to recognise those donors today and, if they are willing, take a photo for our next newsletter and the local paper. When the book is printed, we will host an official launch to celebrate and thank them once more.



Some of the Stable Fly Chronicle donors in attendance at the AGM

The donors to date are:

- Adam Shields Realty – Adam Shields
- WA History Foundation – Clem Mulcahy & Dr Lenore Layman
- Geoff Slater
- David Ottaway

- Benalong Holdings Ltd – David Roe
- Minderoo Foundation – represented by Cr Andrea Vis in the absence of David Wilson
- WABGA – President Steve Edmondson
- Rio Tinto Community Giving 2024 - Meredith Dixon
- Gingin & Lancelin Community Bank - Linda Balcombe

Bob Wilson

CHAIRMAN, SFAG

23 September 2025



SFAG Meeting with MPs Highlights Biosecurity and Stable Fly Management Challenges

On 5 June 2025, the Stable Fly Action Group (SFAG) met with local Members of Parliament Shane Love (Member for Mid West) and Lachlan Hunter (Member for Central Wheatbelt; Shadow Minister for Agriculture) at the Shire of Gingin Council Chambers. The meeting, chaired by Bob Wilson, brought together community representatives, Shire officers, and SFAG committee members to discuss the continuing challenge of stable fly management.

A key feature of the meeting was the presentation of the SFAG stable fly outbreak map, which clearly demonstrated the ongoing severity of infestations across the region. (See map on page 10 of this issue.)

SFAG Concerns

SFAG outlined its ongoing concerns regarding:

- The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's (DPIRD) role and responsibility under the **Stable Fly Management Plan (SFMP)**.
- Delays in completing the long-awaited **review of the 2019 SFMP**.
- The question of **delegation of powers** to Shires under the SFMP, and the need for proper financial support if this occurs.
- The **biosecurity and disease transmission risks** associated with stable fly outbreaks.
- Ongoing **animal welfare issues** caused by infestations.



A bull in distress from a Stable Fly onslaught

Parliamentary Response

Mr Hunter noted that while the review of the **Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (BAM) Act** had been completed, processes following from that review may explain the delay in finalising the SFMP. He undertook to raise the matter directly with government to clarify the cause of the holdup.

Both Mr Hunter and Mr Love acknowledged that significant government funds are directed to other declared pests, such as the Shot Hole Borer, and also to the RSPCA for animal welfare. They agreed it was inconsistent that similar funding was not forthcoming for stable fly management and committed to raising this matter in Parliament.

Mr Love also suggested that a **petition to Parliament** could be a useful way for affected communities to demonstrate the strength of concern on this issue.

Shire of Gingin's Position

The Shire of Gingin, through CEO Scott Wildgoose and Stable Fly Control Officer Mick Emmanuel, outlined a Three-Tiered Business Model to be presented to the Minister. Key elements include:

- Full delegation of powers under the BAM Act from DPIRD to the Shire, including prosecution powers.
- Funding to employ up to **six horticultural agronomists** to provide field advice and best-practice guidance to growers.
- Stronger focus on **biosecurity and chemical use in irrigated horticulture**, with the aim of achieving a sustainable, viable, and ultimately stable-fly-free industry.

Conclusion

Chairman Bob Wilson thanked the attending MPs for their support and the Shire of Gingin for hosting the

meeting. Proceedings concluded with afternoon tea at CU@Park, joined by members of the affected community.



The Biosecurity Council of WA - What is it?

The Biosecurity Council of Western Australia was established in 2008 as a specialist advisory group to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, and the Director General of Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

The Council operates at a strategic level, with a long-term vision for effective biosecurity in WA for the protection of WA's environment, agriculture/aquaculture industries, social amenity, and economic development.

The Biosecurity Council of WA comprises seven members, in total. The three members of the Council who visited the Shire of Gingin were:

Dr Tracy Sullivan Veterinarian and representative on the Australian Veterinary Association Board and Policy Councillor for Cattle Australia. She serves on the National Farmers Federation Indigenous Engagement Working Group. Holds Master's and PhD degrees in Veterinary Science with over 20 years of combined clinical, research, and teaching experience. Also an experienced beef and cereal producer.

Ms Renata Paliskis Non-Executive Director of Animal Health Australia with extensive committee experience including 18 positions over 24 years (Cattle Industry Funding Scheme, Sheep Cooperative Research Centre, WA Meat Industry Authority). Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and owner-manager of a breeding and feedlot business.

Prof Shashi Sharma Over 40 years in food and agriculture, holding positions as Professor and Chair in Biosecurity and Food Security, international consultant, President of the World BioProtection Forum, and Chairman of the World BioProtection Research Foundation. Co-authored *Vision Infinity for Food Security* promoting the 3Ps (Produce, Protect, Provide) approach.



Biosecurity Council of WA – Stakeholder Review

(Condensed from 1100 words)

Author: **Graham McAlpine**

Retired Horticulture Systems, Food Safety,
Biosecurity and NRM Specialist
(PNRM Landcare Facilitator 2014–2023)

Purpose of the Review

In October 2025, Perth NRM was invited by the Biosecurity Council of WA (BCWA) to participate in the 2025 Stable Fly Stakeholder Engagement Review, undertaken to understand the current social, economic, and biosecurity impacts of Stable Fly in Western Australia. Perth NRM has supported the Stable Fly Action Group (SFAG) since 2013.

Role of the Biosecurity Council

BCWA advises the Minister for Agriculture and Food and the Director General of DPIRD on strategic biosecurity matters, including system gaps, community engagement, and cross-sector collaboration. The Council's current review aims to reassess the severity of Stable Fly impacts, emerging risks, and the effectiveness of existing management frameworks.

Perth NRM Interview Summary (20/10/25)

PNRM CEO Keith Pekin, Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator Tibby Tuckett, and former facilitator Graham McAlpine met with BCWA representatives Professor Owen Nevin and M/s Renata Paliskis.

PNRM outlined its long-term role supporting landholders affected by Stable Fly, facilitating research partnerships, and helping communities understand life-cycle interruption techniques.

Challenges in WA Biosecurity Delivery

Mr Pekin reiterated longstanding concerns that DPIRD's current structure disperses staff across programs, limiting the effectiveness of pest incursion response. The absence of a dedicated biosecurity workforce diminishes continuity and accountability.

The author noted that DPIRD's geographic fragmentation since vacating South Perth has further hindered coordinated response efforts.

Stable Fly as a Pest in Western Australia

Stable Fly has caused escalating community and livestock impacts for more than 20 years. Its rapid population growth stems from ideal breeding conditions created by changes in horticulture, livestock feeding systems, and organic waste accumulation.

A major driver of conflict has been lack of community

understanding of the fly's life cycle and how specific land management practices contribute to breeding.

Declared Pest Status & Management Plan

Stable Fly is a **C3 declared pest** under the BAM Act 2007 across 14 local government areas. DPIRD research led by Dr David Cook informed the **Stable Fly Management Plan (SFMP) 2019**, but its 2022 review remains incomplete.

Compliance Failures

A central point raised was the **absence of enforcement**:

- Compliance responsibility is delegated to local government officers, many of whom do an exceptional job.
- However, **DPIRD has not enabled any prosecution powers.**
- The SFMP contains **no penalty provisions**, leaving non-compliant landholders unaccountable.
- As a result, Stable Fly numbers in the 2024 season were comparable to levels seen 20 years ago.

This stands in stark contrast to strong national border biosecurity penalties now applied under the DAFF Infringement Notice Scheme.

Emerging Biosecurity Risk

Stable Fly is now a recognised vector of serious livestock diseases internationally, including **Bovine Leucosis** and **Lumpy Skin Disease**. With LSD present in Indonesia and cattle movements from northern Australia into the Perth region, uncontrolled Stable Fly populations present a **significant biosecurity threat to WA and Australia**.

Pathway to Improvement

Key recommendations highlighted:

- **Strengthen Local Government Support**
Local Stable Fly Inspectors have shown what can be achieved through positive engagement and practical problem-solving.
- **Update Leading Management Practices**
New findings from field officers - such as wheel-rut disruption techniques - must be included in the revised SFMP.
- **Introduce Penalty Provisions**
Enforcement measures must be legislated so DPIRD can initiate prosecutions where requirements are wilfully ignored.

With shared responsibility across government, industry, and community, meaningful practice change is achievable.

Meeting Conclusion

BCWA thanked PNRM for its long-term involvement and insights into the stable fly issue.



Biosecurity Council of WA Visits Gingin to Assess Stable Fly Threat

On Wednesday 15 October 2025, three members of the Biosecurity Council of WA travelled to Gingin to gain a first-hand understanding of the persistent Stable Fly problem and its broader biosecurity implications for WA and the nation. Their visit marked a follow-through on the commitment given a few months earlier to engage directly with affected communities and to inspect the on-ground conditions contributing to recurring outbreaks.

A Morning Briefing at the Shire Offices

The day began at 9:15 am at the Shire of Gingin offices, where Council members were welcomed by Shire CEO Scott Wildgoose, Executive Manager James Bayliss, and Stable Fly Control Officer Mick Emmanuel. This initial briefing provided essential background on the history of the outbreak, the regulatory landscape, and the challenges faced by both the Shire and local landholders in preventing and managing infestations.

The discussion also highlighted a key emerging theme: the potential for poorly managed irrigation systems and organic-waste practices to escalate a local nuisance into a state-level biosecurity risk.

Engagement with the Stable Fly Action Group

At 10:00 am, the delegation met with Bob Wilson, Chair of the Stable Fly Action Group (SFAG), along with several committee members. Over a purposeful 30-minute session, the Council heard about the decade-long battle waged by residents and producers in Gingin and the surrounding districts.

SFAG spoke candidly about the core causes:

- the misuse of centre-pivot and linear irrigation systems for dispersing inadequately processed organic waste,
- gaps in monitoring and enforcement, and
- the severe impacts on livestock, community wellbeing, and local businesses.

The Council was briefed on the significant biosecurity

implications should stable fly populations increase or spread—particularly given parallels with overseas agricultural pest pathways.

Farm Visit: T&C Do and Son, Woodridge

At 11:00 am, the group travelled to T&C Do and Son Farm on Caraban Road, Woodridge, a site using fixed, straight-line irrigation. Here, they met with Farm Manager Mr Ali Al-Boraich, who explained recent improvements in irrigation practice and organic-waste handling.



Quality broccoli, unwanted at market, destined to be buried

At the same venue, the Council also spoke with Agronomist Terry Friemond, who provided technical insight into how differing irrigation systems influence stable fly breeding pressure. Friemond reinforced that irrigation timing, soil saturation, and organic-matter placement can either prevent or accelerate outbreaks.



Truckloads of waste vegetables

Meeting Affected Landholders

At 12:15 pm, the Council visited Angela and Shane Clifton, fifth-generation cattle farmers who have long

*Report incidences of Stable Flies biting you, your family or your livestock to your **Shire/City Council, SFAG or DPIRD.***

Consistent reporting provides valuable data for critical analysis concerning this fly pest.

Contact details on last page.

endured the worst impacts of stable fly activity. The Cliftons detailed the ongoing stress on livestock, the financial strain caused by reduced grazing capacity, and the significant personal burden placed on families living through repeated infestations, year after year.



From Left to Right: Sharni Clifton, Dr Tracy Sullivan, Shane and Angela Clifton, Ms Renata Paliskis and Prof Shashi Sharma

Their experience underscored the human dimension of what is often framed as a regulatory or agricultural issue—and highlighted the urgency of meaningful systemic change.

Working Lunch at Guilderton

A brief lunch break in Guilderton at 1:15 pm offered time for reflection and further informal discussion among Council members, Shire representatives, and SFAG attendees.

Inspection of Pivot Irrigation at Bogdanich Farm

At 2:30 pm, the Council visited Bogdanich Farm on Glenrowan Road, Neergabby, where centre-pivot irrigation is in use. This visit was especially important, given the strong links between poorly managed pivot systems and stable fly breeding.

On-site discussions focused on:

- how pivot irrigation that applies nutrient-rich organic material to moist soils can create ideal breeding conditions,
- the need for clearer standards for organic-waste composting and application, and
- the importance of timely inspections and compliance to prevent recurrence. The site visit reinforced that improvements in irrigation practice - along with stricter oversight - will be essential to reducing biosecurity risks moving forward.



Looking for larvae in the irrigated post-harvest waste



... and finding them, in decomposing celery

A Valuable and Productive Visit

The Biosecurity Council's visit to Gingin represented a significant step in elevating stable fly management from a localised community complaint to a recognised biosecurity priority. With council members now having witnessed the conditions first-hand, the community is hopeful that the forthcoming recommendations to the Minister will deliver the robust regulatory and operational reforms long needed.

The Stable Fly Action Group, the Shire of Gingin, and local producers all expressed appreciation for the Council's engagement and look forward to ongoing collaboration as the review progresses.



The Problem with Common Names: Why "Stable Fly" and *Stomoxys calcitrans* Matter

For anyone working in pest management, agriculture, or biosecurity, clear communication is critical. Yet one of the biggest barriers to effective discussion, and even regulatory action, is the inconsistent use of common names for insects. The **stable fly** (*Stomoxys calcitrans*) is a prime example of why precision matters.

The Vagaries of Common Names

Common names vary wildly by region, language, and even personal habit. While they serve a colloquial purpose, they can also:

- **Cause confusion** (e.g., "biting fly" could mean stable fly, horse fly, or black fly).
- **Hinder research** (a scientist searching for "dog fly" may miss key studies on *Stomoxys calcitrans*).
- **Complicate regulation** (laws reference specific names—ambiguity weakens enforcement).
- For instance, the stable fly has been called:
- **"Biting house fly"** (misleading, as it's not a true house fly)
- **"Dog fly"** (common in the Caribbean, but obscure elsewhere)
- **"Power mower fly"** (a U.S. colloquialism)

If a farmer reports "biting flies," does that mean stable flies, march flies, or midges? Without clarity, control efforts may misfire.

Why Scientific Names Matter

The only fail-safe way to ensure accuracy is to use the scientific name: *Stomoxys calcitrans*. This:

- **Eliminates ambiguity**—every researcher, regulator, and producer worldwide recognises it.
- **Links to global databases** (e.g., CABI, PubMed) where common names are unreliable.
- **Ensures legal precision** (the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and other regulations use scientific names).

Even if you prefer common names, *always* include *Stomoxys calcitrans* in writing, especially in reports, funding bids, or policy discussions.

"Stable Fly" Has Precedence

While regional nicknames persist, "**stable fly**" is the most widely accepted common name for *Stomoxys calcitrans*. This is backed by:

1. **Scientific consensus** (used in entomology textbooks, extension guides, and peer-reviewed papers).
2. **Regulatory recognition** (the **Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (BAM) Act** uses "stable fly," giving it legal weight).
3. **Industry adoption** (veterinary, agricultural, and pest control sectors overwhelmingly use

this term).

Using alternatives like "biting fly" or "dog fly" risks fragmentation; when we *standardise terminology*, we improve collaboration.

A Call for Consistency

To strengthen our collective efforts against this costly pest, we should:

1. **Use "stable fly" as the primary common name** in all communications.
2. **Always include *Stomoxys calcitrans*** in technical writing.
3. **Avoid vague terms** like "biting fly" unless clarifying further.

By adopting this practice, we ensure clearer science, better policy, and more effective control. After all, if we can't even agree on what to call it, how can we defeat it?

Let's speak the same language - for the sake of science, agriculture, and biosecurity.



Stable Fly Bumper Sticker Campaign

The SFAG Committee has produced bumper/windscreen stickers to assist the public in gaining further awareness of this insect pest, and also to facilitate the reporting of Stable Fly incidents.



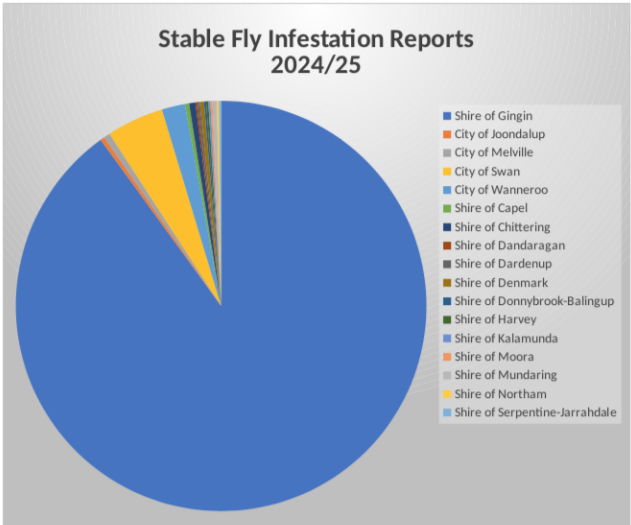
Bogdanich Farms

At our recent AGM, members approved both an increase in annual membership fees and the introduction of a new Commercial Membership category. The SFAG Committee is delighted to announce that **Bogdanich Farms** has become our first official **Commercial Member**.

We extend our sincere thanks to Andrew and Michael Bogdanich and their team at the Neergabby operation for their ongoing support and commitment to SFAG's work. Their involvement marks an important milestone in strengthening our group's capacity to tackle the stable fly issue together.

Stable Fly Reports

by Denise Kowald and Chris Maude



Shire of Gingin	541
City of Joondalup	2
City of Melville	3
City of Swan	27
City of Wanneroo	11
Shire of Capel	2
Shire of Chittering	3
Shire of Dandaragan	1
Shire of Dardanup	1

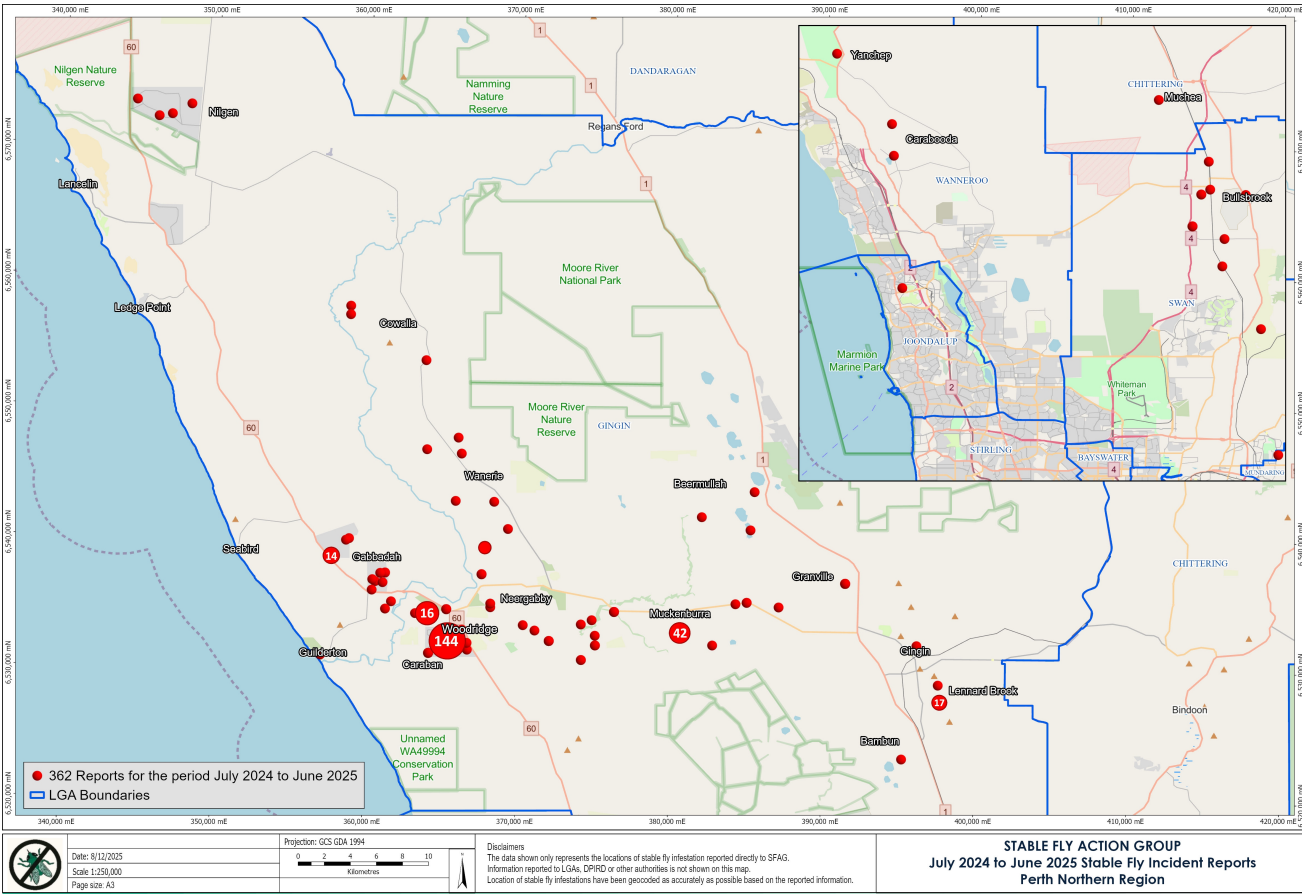
Shire of Denmark	2
Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup	1
Shire of Harvey	1
Shire of Kalamunda	1
Shire of Moora	1
Shire of Mundaring	2
Shire of Northam	1
Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale	1
TOTAL REPORTS	601

This year has seen a significant increase in reports of Stable Fly activity to SFAG, which has greatly strengthened our efforts to advance this issue with government departments and representatives.

Community reporting continues to be the most effective way to demonstrate the extent and impact of the problem. Videos and photographs add valuable evidence, helping to convey the year-round effect this pest has on our community. Even so, written reports alone remain vital - every submission, with or without images, contributes essential data that keeps this issue front and centre on decision-makers' agendas.

Without the information provided by the community, we would still be tackling this problem in isolation, without the data needed to support meaningful action. Keep reporting - and keep up the fight!

Scientific understanding of stable fly populations relies on systematic monitoring, but community observations provide crucial context that laboratory data cannot capture - such as impacts on pets, outdoor activities, and seasonal variations. Interestingly, the relationship between fly numbers and perceived nuisance isn't linear: studies show complaints increase exponentially once counts exceed 5-10 flies per person, even though populations may range into thousands. This reporting threshold helps researchers identify critical intervention points and demonstrates why consistent community feedback builds the comprehensive dataset needed for effective management strategies.



Thank you to all who have already renewed their SFAG membership for 2025/26. Your support via your membership is valued and appreciated.

If you are yet to renew...

On-line members : You can renew your membership via the SFAG website

www.stableflyactiongroup.org.au

Just download and return the form. You can pay by direct deposit.

BENDIGO BANK,
BSB 633 000 ACC No 1260 87790

Lumpy Skin Disease: A Biosecurity Threat on the Horizon – Why Stable Fly Control is Crucial

The Stable Fly Action Group (SFAG) has long championed the critical role of stable fly control in protecting livestock. While we often focus on the direct impact of stable fly bites – irritation, weight loss, and reduced productivity – it's imperative that we also acknowledge their potential as vectors for devastating diseases. One such disease, Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), poses a significant and escalating biosecurity risk to Australia's cattle industry, and the stable fly's role in its transmission cannot be overstated.

Lumpy Skin Disease, caused by a *capripoxvirus*, is a highly contagious viral disease of cattle characterised by fever, enlarged superficial lymph nodes, and the eruption of characteristic firm, circumscribed nodules (lumps) on the skin. These lesions can cover the entire body, including the muzzle, nostrils, and internal organs. While mortality rates are generally low, the economic impact of LSD is immense, stemming from:

- Significant production losses: Reduced milk yield, weight loss, abortion, and infertility.
- Damage to hides: Permanent scarring renders hides worthless.
- Trade restrictions: Outbreaks lead to severe limitations on live animal and product exports.
- High control and eradication costs: Extensive culling, vaccination campaigns, and movement restrictions.

The Alarming Spread and the Role of Vectors

Historically confined to Africa, LSD has been steadily

spreading through the Middle East, Asia, and more recently, into Southeast Asia. Its proximity to Australia is a grave concern. The primary mode of transmission for LSD is through insect vectors, with biting flies playing a crucial role. While mosquitoes and other biting insects can contribute, stable flies (*Stomoxys calcitrans*) are considered highly efficient mechanical vectors of LSD virus.

Here's why stable flies are a particular concern for LSD transmission:

- **Obligate Blood Feeders:** Both male and female stable flies feed exclusively on blood, taking multiple blood meals a day from various hosts. This frequent feeding behaviour significantly increases their potential to pick up and transmit the virus.
- **Interrupted Feeding:** Stable flies are easily disturbed during feeding and will often move from one animal to another to complete their blood meal. This "interrupted feeding" pattern is a highly effective mechanism for mechanical transmission of blood-borne pathogens like LSD.
- **Proximity to Livestock:** Stable flies are closely associated with livestock environments, breeding in decaying organic matter such as silage, hay, and manure – all readily available on cattle farms. Along with the often closely located irrigated horticulture operations, this ensures a constant presence near susceptible animals.
- **Persistence of Virus:** The LSD virus can remain viable on the mouthparts of stable flies for several hours, allowing for transmission between animals even if feeding is interrupted.

Australia's Vulnerability and the Need for Proactive Measures

Australia's cattle population, currently free of LSD, is highly susceptible. An incursion would have catastrophic consequences for our beef and dairy industries. While border biosecurity measures are paramount, the highly mobile nature of stable flies and other vectors means that an outbreak, should it occur, could spread rapidly. This underscores the critical importance of robust, proactive biosecurity measures at the farm level, and effective stable fly control must be a cornerstone of these efforts.

What Can We Do?

The SFAG strongly urges all cattle producers and landholders to redouble their efforts in stable fly management. This includes:

- **Integrated Pest Management (IPM):** Employ a combination of strategies including:

- **Source Reduction:** Eliminating or treating stable fly breeding sites (e.g., composting manure, proper silage management, cleaning up spilled feed).
- **Trapping:** Utilising stable fly traps to reduce adult populations. (See article on Trapping elsewhere in this edition)
- **Insecticides** (where appropriate): Judicious and targeted use of approved insecticides.
- **Vigilance and Reporting:** Be acutely aware of any unusual skin lesions or signs of disease in your cattle. Report any suspicious symptoms immediately to your veterinarian or relevant biosecurity authorities. Early detection is vital for containment.
- **Report Stable Fly Outbreaks:** Assist in the control of stable flies by reporting their biting activity to your Shire, to DPIRD or directly to SFAG.
- **Farm Biosecurity Plans:** Review and strengthen your on-farm biosecurity plans to minimise the risk of disease introduction and spread. This includes controlling visitor access, cleaning and disinfection protocols, and managing livestock movements.
- **Industry Collaboration:** Support and participate in industry-wide initiatives aimed at preventing and preparing for LSD incursions.

The threat of Lumpy Skin Disease is real and growing. By understanding the role of stable flies in its potential spread and by implementing effective control measures, we can significantly bolster Australia's biosecurity defences and protect our vital cattle industry. The Stable Fly Action Group remains committed to providing resources and information to assist in these crucial efforts. Let's work together to keep Australia LSD-free.



*The SFAG Committee gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of **Perth NRM** members, whose generosity has enabled the printing and collation of this Newsletter for the past 10 years.*

Trapping Stable Flies

Stable fly traps work by exploiting the flies' natural behaviours, primarily their visual and sometimes olfactory cues, to lure them to a device where they are then captured or killed. Here's a breakdown of

how this is achieved:

1. Visual Attraction:

- **Colour Preference:** Stable flies are strongly attracted to certain colors, particularly white, blue, and black. Many effective traps utilise these colours on panels or cylinders to attract flies. The Alsynite panel traps (like the Williams or Broce traps) are well-known examples that leverage the flies' attraction to the electromagnetic energy reflected by these panels. New materials like Coroplast have also proven effective.

- **Contrast and Shape:** The shape and contrast of the trap against its surroundings can also play a role. For instance, some traps are designed as cylinders or panels that stand out, mimicking a potential host or resting surface.

- **Movement/Light Changes** (for some specific designs): While less common for typical stable fly traps, some specialised designs (like certain traps for buffalo flies, which are a similar biting fly) use changes in light intensity to dislodge flies from cattle as they pass through, luring them into a trapping compartment.

2. Trapping Mechanism: Once attracted, the flies are captured by various means:

- **Sticky Surfaces:** This is the most common method. The visually attractive panels or cylinders are coated with a non-drying, sticky adhesive (like "Tack Trap" or similar glues). When stable flies land on the surface, they become stuck and are unable to fly away. The presence of trapped flies can even attract more flies, as stable flies tend to gather in groups.

- **Enclosed Traps with One-Way Entry:** Some traps are designed with a funnel or a specially designed portal that allows flies to enter but prevents them from escaping. Once inside, they may drown in water (if the trap contains liquid bait) or simply die from dehydration or inability to feed.

- **Insecticide-Treated Targets:** While not strictly "traps" in the capture sense, some systems use visually attractive targets (e.g., dark cloth targets) treated with insecticides. Flies are attracted to land on these targets and are killed by contact with the insecticide. This can be very effective in reducing populations.

3. Olfactory Attraction (Lures/Baits):

While visual cues are primary, the addition of olfactory attractants (odours) can significantly enhance trap effectiveness. Researchers are developing and testing lures that mimic host odours

(e.g., bovine skin microbes or specific chemical compounds like carvone + p-cresol) to draw more stable flies to the traps. These lures are often released from dispensers within or near the trap.

How Traps Reduce Adult Populations

By actively removing adult stable flies from the environment, traps contribute to population reduction in several ways:

- **Direct Mortality:** The most obvious effect is the direct killing of the flies that are captured. This immediately reduces the number of biting flies.

- **Reduced Reproduction:** By removing adult females before they can lay eggs, traps break the stable fly life cycle. Female stable flies require a blood meal before they can reproduce and lay eggs. Each female can lay hundreds of eggs, so removing even a single female can prevent the emergence of a large number of future flies.

- **Reduced Biting Pressure:** Fewer adult flies mean less biting pressure on livestock, leading to improved animal welfare, reduced stress, and better productivity (e.g., increased weight gain, milk production).

- **Disease Transmission Reduction:** Critically, by reducing the number of biting flies, traps also reduce the potential for stable flies to act as mechanical vectors for diseases like Lumpy Skin Disease. Fewer flies mean fewer opportunities for the virus to be picked up from an infected animal and transferred to a susceptible one.

While traps are a valuable tool, which can be effective when integrated into a comprehensive stable fly management program, it's only through reducing the number and size of stable fly breeding sites that a major reduction in the stable fly problem can be achieved.

Types of Traps

Alsynite panel traps, such as the Williams and Broce traps, are sticky traps used to monitor and control stable fly populations. They utilise translucent Alsynite fibreglass panels, often coated with an adhesive, to capture flies attracted to the visual cues of the trap. Williams traps are characterised by two Alsynite panels interlocked at right angles, while Broce traps utilise a single Alsynite panel formed into a cylinder.

Williams Trap:

- Consists of two translucent Alsynite panels (typically 35 x 45 cm) interlocked to form four vanes.
- Panels can be directly coated with adhesive or

covered with a plastic sleeve before adhesive application.

- The design creates a four-sided trap, with each side acting as a vane to intercept flies.

Broce Trap:

- A cylindrical trap made from a single piece of Alsynite (e.g., 30 x 60 cm).
- Easier and less expensive to construct than the Williams trap.
- Requires only one plastic sleeve (if used) for covering the entire cylinder.
- The cylindrical shape provides a larger surface area for capturing flies.

Alsynite Material:

- Alsynite is a translucent fibreglass material that reflects ultraviolet (UV) light, which is attractive to stable flies.
- The material's UV-reflective properties are a key factor in attracting the flies to the traps.
- More recently, other materials like Coroplast have been shown to be more attractive to stable flies than Alsynite.

Effectiveness and Improvements:

- Both Williams and Broce traps have been shown to be effective in capturing stable flies.
- The Broce trap is often considered more efficient in terms of material usage and ease of maintenance.
- Researchers have explored improvements to these traps, such as using different materials (e.g., Coroplast) or incorporating olfactory attractants to enhance their effectiveness.



Lumpy Skin Disease fact sheet

Disease and cause

Lumpy skin disease (LSD) is an acute, highly infectious disease of cattle, camels and buffalo.

The disease is caused by a virus of the family Poxviridae that is similar to the viruses that cause sheep pox and goat pox. The virus is mostly transmitted by biting insects.

Species affected

LSD affects ruminants, primarily cattle, although a few cases have been seen in water buffalo and camels. LSD is not a zoonotic disease (ie it does not affect humans).

Distribution

The disease has never been recorded in Australia.

LSD is generally considered endemic in sub-Saharan Africa, parts of the Middle East and Turkey. Since 2015, it has spread to the Balkan countries, the Caucasus and the Russian Federation.

Since 2019, outbreaks have been reported in south and east Asia, including Bangladesh, India and China. More recently, outbreaks have been reported in a territory of Taiwan and in Nepal, Indonesia and Singapore (possibly from the movement of flies or mosquitoes from neighbouring countries). In 2022, the disease was reported in northern Indonesia.

Potential pathways for introduction into Australia

LSD may be spread by the movement of infected animals. However, it is unlikely that the disease will enter Australia through importation of live cattle or their germplasm, as cattle and genetic material are not imported from LSD-endemic countries.

The most likely route for the introduction of LSD into Australia is following establishment of the disease in neighbouring countries to the north, with the virus then carried by vectors into northern Australia.

Currently, the potential for introduction of LSD via insects entering Australia from countries in the region is high — especially since the disease has been detected in Indonesia. There is an increased risk of infected insects translocating across the seas north of Australia, or entering through international ports.

Key signs

Firm, raised nodules up to 50 mm in diameter develop on the skin within 1–2 days, especially around the head, neck, genitals and limbs. The centres of the nodules die, after which the resultant scabs ('sitfasts') may fall out, leaving large, ulcerous holes that are subject to secondary bacterial infections.

Nodules also develop in the nose, throat and gut. Oedema of the limbs, brisket and genitals also occurs. Susceptible cattle of all ages can develop serious clinical disease if infected with LSD virus. Therefore, introduction of LSD into Australia could result in high mortalities and rapid spread of the disease.

Spread

LSD virus is present in eye, nose and mouth secretions, and in the semen, milk and blood of infected animals. Under Australian conditions, mechanical transmission of the virus by biting insects may be important. Non-biting insects have also been

implicated in the transfer of infected body fluids.

Many different types of biting insects may be involved in transmission, but particularly mosquitoes and flies. Insect vectors on ships and aircraft may spread the disease, and the virus can be readily transported on clothing and equipment.

Spread by direct contact between cattle does not occur easily, unless animals share a water trough.

Persistence of the virus

LSD virus is very resistant to inactivation in the environment. It has been isolated from shed skin tissue up to 4 months after infection and may be found in blood for 16–28 days, saliva and nasal discharges for up to 18 days, and semen for 42 days.

Impacts for Australia

LSD is one of the biggest biosecurity threats to Australia's cattle (and buffalo) industries; the effect on products would be significant. Trading partners would be expected to introduce emergency measures until an outbreak situation became stable, significantly disrupting exports of meat, dairy, other bovine-derived animal products and some non-bovine products. The impacts may include closure of markets, increased testing requirements, increased requirements for pre-export quarantine, vaccination requirements, and reductions in price premiums for Australian commodities.



Black Soldier Flies: An Old Solution for a New Era of Manure and Fly Control

The Stable Fly Action Group (SFAG) continually seeks innovative and sustainable approaches to fly management. Sometimes, though, the most effective solutions are those that have quietly stood the test of time—waiting to be rediscovered. One such approach involves the remarkable Black Soldier Fly (BSF) *Hermetia illucens* and its larvae, which possess a natural ability to transform organic waste, including poultry manure, into valuable resources. Historically, farmers even encouraged BSF populations in poultry sheds to help control manure buildup. This method, proven by nature and refined by modern science, is now more relevant than ever.

The Problem: Manure Accumulation and Pest Flies

Manure buildup, especially in poultry operations, presents multiple challenges. Beyond being unsightly, it serves as an ideal breeding ground for pest flies—

among them, house flies and stable flies. These insects cause stress in livestock, reduce productivity, and act as vectors for significant diseases such as Lumpy Skin Disease. Accumulated manure also produces unpleasant odours and contributes to environmental problems like nutrient leaching and water contamination.

The Solution: Harnessing the Power of Black Soldier Flies

The principle behind BSF use is elegantly simple: employ the larvae's voracious appetite to convert waste into valuable products. Instead of viewing manure as a problem, it becomes a resource for sustainable nutrient recycling.

How It Works – Then and Now

Natural Attraction and Colonisation:

Adult BSFs are instinctively drawn to decaying organic matter where they lay their eggs. In traditional, open poultry systems, they often colonised manure heaps naturally. Today, this process can be managed more precisely—eggs or young larvae can be intentionally introduced to manure deposits to ensure rapid and consistent colonisation.

The Larval Feast:

Upon hatching, BSF larvae begin feeding intensively, consuming both manure and any remaining feed. Their activity greatly reduces the waste's volume and moisture content—often by more than half—while accelerating decomposition.

Manure Transformation and Sanitisation:

During digestion, the larvae break down harmful pathogens such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. They also help control odours by reducing volatile compounds like ammonia, improving air quality for animals and people nearby.

Frass – A Valuable By-product:

What remains after the larvae finish feeding is called *frass*—a dry, dark, and nutrient-rich material ideal as an organic fertiliser or soil conditioner. It's far less odorous and easier to handle than raw manure.

Self-Harvesting and Value-Adding:

As they mature, BSF larvae naturally migrate away from the feeding area to pupate. This behaviour allows for automatic collection through simple ramp-based systems. The harvested larvae are highly valuable, containing over 40% protein and rich in essential fats. These can be processed into sustainable feed for poultry, aquaculture, and

livestock - effectively closing the nutrient loop on the farm.

The Benefits for Fly Control and Beyond

- **Pest Fly Displacement:** By rapidly consuming manure, BSF larvae eliminate breeding sites used by pest flies such as house flies, significantly reducing pest populations.
- **Waste Reduction and Odour Control:** Their feeding activity addresses manure buildup efficiently, lowering odour emissions and simplifying waste management.
- **Resource Creation:** A waste product becomes two valuable outputs: high-protein insect meal and premium organic fertiliser.
- **Biosecurity Enhancement:** Pathogen reduction and pest control contribute to a healthier, more biosecure farm environment.
- **Sustainability:** BSF systems embody circular agriculture—recycling nutrients, reducing reliance on synthetic inputs, and minimising the farm's environmental footprint.

A Modern Application of an Ancient Wisdom

Black Soldier Fly (BSF) farming has evolved from relying on natural colonisation to becoming a controlled, technology-driven system now being developed and scaled worldwide. In Australia, BSF's potential to transform agricultural waste - such as poultry and pig manure - into high-value animal feed and organic fertiliser is drawing growing interest from researchers and industry innovators alike. One leader in this field is **Arvela**.

For members of the Stable Fly Action Group, understanding and exploring BSF technology presents a natural and effective tool in the fight against stable flies. By harnessing this process to manage breeding sites more efficiently, we can contribute to healthier livestock environments, improved productivity, and a more sustainable agricultural future. This approach reflects a timeless truth: nature often holds the simplest and most elegant solutions.

Note: Anyone interested in utilising BSF larvae on their property is encouraged to contact Luke Wheat of **Arvela** (formerly Future Green Solutions) to learn how to get started.



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Don't forget to report Stable Fly outbreaks on your own property!

Report to your Shire or City council

or to SFAG via the SFAG website
www.sfag.au and click the **Report Now** button

or to DPIRD:
using *MyPestGuide* website or
MyPestGuideReporter app
(App available free from GooglePlay and iTunes)

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